

A Easter 6

20th May 17

Place: St Mary's

I Peter 3.13-22

Theme: Baptism and

Discipleship

John 14.15-21

- ◆ Today we are making a new disciple of Christ. A Baptisms reminds us of our own baptism and discipleship. It is a chance to reflect again on what it means to be a Christian and what it means to be the church.
- ◆ Coco is beginning her life in the Church today and becoming a disciple of Christ. She is of course far too little to understand this at the moment; indeed it will take her a lifetime to grow into it. Many of were baptised as infants, and even those who were not, need to grow into the full understanding of the richness of discipleship and the church. It is important to use these miles stones to pause and reflect on where we have come in our journey with God and where we are going.
- ◆ Being a disciple of Christ gives us three great gifts in life. Knowing who we are, knowing where we are going, and knowing God.
- ◆ Human beings need to know who they are and where they belong. Our political life is currently being dominated by those who are anxious for their identity or wishing their group or tribe to dominate. These political identities are based on exclusion, on knowing who you are because you know who does not belong. Conflicts based on

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identity, between those on the inside and those on the outside causes much of the war, grief and violence in the world.

- ◆ Christ invites us to leave behind the identities that belong to our past and to find a new identity in him. We know who we are because he has called us by name and we are his. As disciples of Christ we discover that we are his beloved children and that everyone else is too. That is why as disciples Jesus taught us to love our neighbours.
- ◆ Secondly, we know where we are going. We are born into a world of confusion, trouble, beauty and complexity. We each need to find our way in the world, but how do we know which way to go? Jesus Christ calls us into his kingdom. He calls us into a future of hope and redemption, in the midst of this beautiful and broken world. He calls us to a place where all that has been lost is restored and the glimpses of glory we catch in this life are fully realised. He calls us into his kingdom. It is not easy to find the way, it is not easy to recognise, and so he comes to lead us there himself.
- ◆ Thirdly he calls us to know God. When we find the Kingdom, when we know who we are we will be at home with God. We will no longer find ourselves lost and drifting in the world, but at home with God, in the loving, intimacy of the father's house, and all will be well.

- ◆ We get so easily confused about God. We so easily and so often worship the wrong things and make things that are less than God our gods. When we do, they cause terrible trouble and bring death and destruction to us and to other people. Some people see the damage false religion does and decide that the only response is to reject God altogether and deny God's existence. Unfortunately, human beings cannot live without God. We all worship something. We all make something the source of meaning and purpose in our lives. We would have much better conversations with each other about God if instead of asking 'Do you believe in God?' we asked each other 'Who or what do you worship?'
- ◆ Christ's call to be disciples is a call to be fully alive, fully human. We cannot do this on our own, so he sends his holy spirit to work within us, to form us, to lead us and inspire us.
- ◆ We also need each other to grow into the fully alive human beings that God wants us to be. Coco is receiving a great gift today, but she will need to be encouraged and shown how to unwrap it and live in it if she is to benefit from it. There are three things she will need to do, in particular:
 - ◆ 1. She will need to come to church regularly to learn to know Jesus Christ and to follow him.
 - ◆ 2. She will need lean to learn to pray and read the Bible so she comes to know the true God and

recognise false ones. Coming to church will help her do that.

- ◆ Praying is difficult. When we come to church we learn how to pray from each other, from the tradition in the form of the liturgy and from the scriptures. One of the reasons I am keen for us to sing the psalms together is because they are a treasury of prayer that has taught the people of God how to pray for nearly 3000 years. I have learned a very great deal about prayer from them, as did Jesus, as did the first disciples as have done Christians every since.
- ◆ 3. She will need to take what she has learned and live her faith in the world. If she does this she will become good news to the people around her. She we become the person Jesus is talking about in the Gospel, who because she loves him will keep his commandments not because she feels she ought to but because it is her deepest joy and desire. She will become that great glory of God, a human being fully alive.